



*From Brown to the Ballot:  
African American  
Leadership Summit  
2004*

## **Democrats and African Americans:** *Building on Past Accomplishments to Create a Stronger Nation and Safer Future*

**Thursday, July 15, 2004**

---

*A Special Congressional Report Prepared by staff of the:*

*Congressional Black Caucus*

*Senate Democratic Policy Committee*

*Office of Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle*

*Office of House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi*



*From Brown to the Ballot:  
African American  
Leadership Summit  
2004*

# Executive Summary

## *Democrats and African Americans: Building on Past Accomplishments to Create a Stronger Nation and Safer Future*

This year marks two significant anniversaries in the fight for civil rights and opportunity. With the 50th anniversary of the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision and the 40th anniversary of the *Civil Rights Act*, Democrats have joined together to celebrate the tremendous progress our country has made in realizing the dream of equal opportunity for all. We also have paused to reflect on the opportunities and challenges that remain, as African American families continue to work to achieve the American dream.

Through this summit, Democrats are recommitting ourselves to build on our record of accomplishment in creating a stronger nation and a safer future for our children and our grandchildren. This report highlights the battles we have waged to create good jobs, improve education, make college more affordable, lower health care costs, help small businesses grow, protect the civil rights and voting rights of all Americans, make our neighborhoods safe and secure, and address international challenges such as HIV/AIDS, hunger, and terrorism.

Today, we pledge to:

**Create economic security for millions of African American workers.** In June, the African American unemployment rate was 10.1 percent, with 1.7 million African Americans actively looking for work. Instead of providing tax cuts for the wealthy, Democrats are fighting to create good jobs by investing in manufacturing, small businesses, infrastructure and technology, and removing incentives that encourage the outsourcing of U.S. jobs. Democrats support investments in job training to equip workers with the essential skills they need to succeed in today's economy, along with extending unemployment benefits for people looking for work. In contrast, Republicans are fighting to squander and waste an additional \$1 trillion over the next ten years on additional tax cuts for those who need them the least.

**Fulfill the promise of a better education.** With eight million African American children enrolled in public elementary schools, Democrats are fighting to fulfill the promise of a better public education for all children. Instead of following the Bush Administration budget proposal, which would deny math and reading help to 4.6 million disadvantaged children, and after-school services to 1.3 million children, we must provide the promised funding for public education. Democrats also are fighting Republican efforts to gut Head Start, which serves nearly 300,000 African American children, and Republican efforts to deny increases in college aid in the face of skyrocketing tuition prices. Democrats are fighting to expand access to college, in part, by investing in Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Pell grants for students.

**Make health care more affordable.** Almost one in five African Americans do not have health insurance and millions more can barely afford to pay their premiums. Yet President Bush is doing nothing to hold down costs. Democrats are fighting to reduce the costs of health care through tax credits for small businesses and by expanding Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program. In contrast, the President would encourage states to limit their Medicaid costs by cutting people from the rolls, cutting benefits, and increasing cost sharing for some of our most vulnerable citizens, which could be detrimental to the over 11 million African Americans who receive health care through Medicaid.

**Reduce the cost of prescription drugs.** With nearly four million African American seniors on Medicare, Democrats are fighting to make prescription drugs more affordable for seniors by improving the unfair, ineffective prescription drug bill passed last year in the Republican-controlled Congress. We also are working to lower the cost of prescription drugs for everyone by creating a safe system for importing prescription drugs from Canada and other major industrialized countries. Republicans have done little to help seniors lower their prescription drug costs by refusing to let the government negotiate discounts for seniors and refusing to allow all Americans to import less expensive drugs from Canada.

**Make civil rights a reality.** Democrats strongly support fully funding the *Help America Vote Act* to prevent voter suppression and voter fraud. In contrast, the President's budget shortchanges election reform, even after the disputed 2000 election results in Florida. Democrats and African Americans will continue to work together to prevent hate crimes, racial profiling, and stop the appointment of judges who will turn back the clock on civil rights.

**Clean up our air and water to protect our children's health.** Studies have shown that toxic waste dumps are located disproportionately in African American communities. In addition, over seven million African Americans live in counties with dangerous air quality, resulting in increased cases of asthma and other respiratory problems. Today, 40 percent of our lakes, rivers, and streams are too polluted for fishing and swimming. Democrats continue to work to ensure that more people are breathing clean air and drinking clean water, and toxic waste and industrial sites are cleaned up. In contrast, under the Bush Administration, enforcement of our environmental protection laws has dropped by 45 percent and clean up of toxic waste dumps has dropped by 50 percent.

**Bolster security at home and abroad.** Democrats pledge to work toward making our nation and our world safer for African Americans and all Americans. Democrats have a strong record of supporting efforts to bolster our homeland security, and are committed to strengthening emergency first responders, critical infrastructure security, and other homeland defenses with increased funding, more coherent planning, and better intelligence-sharing. Maintaining a strong military, fulfilling our promises in Iraq and Afghanistan, and strengthening our resolve to win the war on terror are critical to our national security. Moreover, Democrats will work to address future threats to national and global security by ensuring that the United States continues to lead the fight against HIV/AIDS and hunger, champion sustainable development in developing nations, and promote stability and democracy in Western Hemisphere neighboring countries like Haiti.

From economic opportunity to environmental justice, from civil rights in America to building a civil society in Africa, we will celebrate past victories by working together to meet new challenges.

# Democrats and African Americans:

## *Building on Past Accomplishments to Create a Stronger Nation and Safer Future*

Democrats are fighting to advance a realistic agenda that reflects the issues and concerns of African American families including: economic opportunity; greater financial security in retirement; access to affordable housing; homeownership opportunity; an improved education system; an enhanced health care system; civil rights protection and enforcement; protection of the environment and public health; strong and fair international policy; and improved homeland security. Democrats will continue to champion policy initiatives of importance to the African American community, resist the steady erosion of American values, and advance civil rights initiatives in 2004 and beyond, in order to make our nation stronger and safer for future generations.

### Ensuring Economic Security

Though the struggling economy shows some signs of rebounding, the long-term unemployed, including a large number of African Americans, are not feeling any relief. According to the Center for American Progress, for the most part, the recent economic recovery has been a “job-loss” one. Fewer jobs exist in the third year of this recovery than existed at the start of the recession—a first since World War II. In recent months, the unemployment rate for African Americans has been consistently near twice that of the national average. Even with the recent improvement in jobs data, the June unemployment rate of 10.1 percent among African Americans remains high. In an effort to reduce this disturbing trend of high unemployment among African Americans, Democrats continue to support policies that facilitate creation of additional jobs.

**Restoring prosperity and creating jobs.** Last year, Republicans pursued large-scale permanent tax cuts that will reduce future economic growth and job growth by worsening an already-troubling long-term budget outlook. Democrats resisted that effort and emphasized a more immediate and more affordable approach that would give our economy the boost it needs to create more jobs today, without causing long-term harm. The Democratic approach would have stressed proposals that are more efficient at encouraging immediate economic growth and jobs: unemployment insurance, aid to help states avoid tax increases and spending cuts, and tax relief for low- and middle-income families who are more likely to spend an additional dollar of income than the wealthiest taxpayers who were the main beneficiaries of the Republican proposals. Senate Democrats succeeded in reducing the size of the proposed package in order to limit its long-term harm. Unfortunately, Republicans used a series of gimmicks to evade those restraints. So far, the economy has created two million fewer jobs than the Administration predicted would occur if the tax cuts were enacted.

**Child tax credit.** One of the flaws of the tax bill is its treatment of low-income parents. One in four American children, including nearly half of all African American children, receive no benefit from the bill because their parents’ incomes are too low. The bill accelerated the expansion of the child tax credit from \$600 to \$1,000. However, Republican leaders excluded families with incomes between \$10,500 and \$26,625. Families with nearly 12 million children are affected by this provision, including more than 260,000 children with parents on active military duty—a figure that includes the families of 2.4 million African American children, according to the Children’s Defense Fund. The Senate bill would have covered those families, but—following the lead of the President’s original proposal and the House bill—the final bill denied tax relief to those hard-working families. The Senate has passed legislation to fix this problem, but House Republicans are holding those provisions hostage in an effort to win further tax cuts for wealthier families. In fact, House Republicans voted 25 times against a motion to accept the Senate bill to provide the expanded child tax credit to millions of deserving children.

**Unemployment Insurance (UI) system.** With over one million African Americans looking for work, Democrats are seeking to extend the federal unemployment benefits program, which Republicans let expire at the end of the year. Democrats will continue to advocate for additional UI benefits for the more than one million people who have exhausted their unemployment benefits but still cannot find work. We also have proposed reforming and expanding the existing UI program to cover low-wage and part-time workers, many of whom are African Americans. While part-time and low-wage workers pay into the system, they are often unable to receive benefits while searching for a new job.

**Creating manufacturing jobs.** Democrats are fighting to create manufacturing jobs for the 543,000 African Americans who have lost manufacturing jobs, but Republicans support tax breaks for corporate interests that ship jobs overseas (Source: National Urban League Institute for Opportunity and Equality, January 2004). The President's budget cuts the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), which helps small U.S. manufacturers with everything from plant modernization to employee training, by nearly two-thirds from Fiscal Year 2003—meaning 28,000 workers will either be laid off or not hired (Source: National Urban League Institute for Opportunity and Equality, January 2004). The number of African Americans in manufacturing jobs dropped by more than 26 percent from February 2001 to December 2003 (Source: National Urban League Institute for Opportunity and Equality, January 2004). Democrats are working to increase funding of the MEP, while providing tax relief to U.S. manufacturers, including small business, to create good jobs here at home. Overall, 2.7 million manufacturing jobs have been lost over the past three years, yet the President's budget fails to include a real manufacturing tax credit to create good jobs here at home. Republicans continue to push tax breaks for companies that move American jobs overseas.

**Increasing the minimum wage.** According to the Economic Policy Institute, approximately 1.1 million African Americans would directly benefit from a minimum wage increase to \$7 by April 2006. In 1996, Congress voted to increase the minimum wage. Since then, the cost of living has increased 12 percent while the real value of the minimum wage has steadily declined. Minimum wage employees working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, earn \$10,700 a year, more than \$4,000 below the poverty line for a family of three. The current minimum wage fails to provide enough income to enable minimum wage workers to afford adequate housing in any area of the country.

**Social Security.** Because African Americans are less likely to have accumulated retirement savings, Social Security is critical to ensuring the livelihood of African American seniors. Without Social Security, the poverty rate for African American seniors would increase from 21 percent to 60 percent (Source: Social Security Administration, 2000). Survivors' and disability benefits also are important to African Americans. For these reasons, African Americans have an important stake in protecting and strengthening Social Security. Democrats are deeply concerned about the Bush Administration tax breaks that would borrow and spend all of the money from the Social Security Trust Fund over the next ten years, just as the Baby Boomers are about to retire—at the same time burying the next generation in a sea of red ink amounting to \$1.8 trillion over ten years.

**Small business assistance.** The growth of small business is critical to the prosperity of African Americans in the United States. In 1997, 800,000 African American-owned businesses generated \$71 billion in revenues (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, March 22, 2001). Minority-owned firms have been growing at four times the rate of all firms in the U.S. economy, increasing from 2.1 million to 2.8 million firms from 1992 to 1997 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, July 12, 2001). Many African American small business entrepreneurs rely on the Small Business Administration (SBA) for access to capital, technical assistance, and other resources critical to the growth of their businesses. Despite the importance of small business assistance to the African American community, President Bush has cut SBA resources amounting to one-quarter of its total budget. The President's Fiscal Year 2005 budget would cut \$79 million from the SBA, and reduce funds for more than 30 small business programs throughout the federal government, on average, by more than 66 percent (House Small Business Committee Democratic staff, March 4, 2004). In contrast, recognizing the importance of SBA loan programs to African American-owned small businesses, the Congressional Black Caucus offered an alternative Fiscal Year 2005 budget that would have provided \$150 million to the SBA to preserve these vital initiatives. This month, House Democrats offered an amendment to restore the \$79 million the President's budget cut from the SBA's (7)a loan program. Despite strong Republican opposition, the amendment passed by a vote of 281 yeas to 137 nays.

**Microloan Program.** This program provides loans to low-income entrepreneurs, minorities, and women—those with the least access to capital and opportunities. Microloans create jobs, financial independence and security, and contribute to economic development in low-income communities. Last year, the Microloan Program provided \$26.5 million in loans and \$15 million in technical assistance. The President's budget proposal would eliminate this program which as a result, would disproportionately harm African American small business owners. African Americans use SBA microloans the most of all SBA financing programs. Last year, 30 percent of SBA microloans went to African Americans.



**7(a) Loan Guarantee Program.** The President has once again proposed eliminating all funding for the SBA's flagship loan program which provides long-term capital to small businesses. Instead, President Bush would fund the program through borrower and lender fee increases, cutting out the neediest borrowers. For the smallest borrowers, the fee would double, and the program changes would severely impair the program's ability to serve the full range of small business it serves today.

**New Markets Venture Capital Program; the BusinessLINC program; and the Program for Investment in Micro-entrepreneurs (PRIME).** President Bush's Fiscal Year 2005 budget proposal would completely eliminate key programs which help meet the needs of minority and low-income businesses. The President would eliminate the New Markets Venture Capital Program, which brings equity investment to low-income, high-unemployment areas where the private sector will not invest. The President would eliminate the BusinessLINC program, which fosters business-to-business relationships between large and small firms and has shown measurable success in creating new teaming arrangements, contracts, and new jobs as a result of partnering small businesses in low-income areas with larger firms. The President also would eliminate the Program for Investment in Micro-entrepreneurs (PRIME), which provides business counseling and training to low-income micro-entrepreneurs who have talent and a good idea, but lack sufficient training and experience to manage cash flow and inventory, navigate and comply with regulations, and grow their profits to build wealth and create jobs.

**The 7(j) Technical Assistance Program.** President Bush's budget also would eliminate funding for additional SBA programs that provide technical assistance to small business entrepreneurs. This move is particularly distressing to African American businesses or businesses in low-income areas since they rely heavily on local SBA centers for personalized assistance. The 7(j) Technical Assistance Program provides technical and management expertise and resources to developing minority-owned 8(a) small businesses. The lack of technical assistance in accounting, grant writing, and bidding on federal contracts is the primary reason many 8(a) businesses are unable to compete with larger firms and ultimately fail. Despite this situation, President Bush's Fiscal Year 2005 budget proposal cuts the 7(j) Technical Assistance Program by 25 percent.

**Access to federal contracts.** President Bush has failed to address one of the biggest concerns of small businesses: access to federal contracts. The federal government has a responsibility to ensure that small businesses receive their fair share of federal contracts. Yet, because of the increased bundling of federal contracts, fewer small businesses have the capacity to make bids on these larger contracts. In 2002, federal contracts to small businesses fell almost \$900 million short of the 23 percent small business utilization goal.

**Procurement Center Representatives (PCRs).** PCRs are responsible for isolating contracts and sections of larger (proposed and existing) federal contracts that can be done by small firms in order to counter the negative affects of federal contract bundling and consolidation of small businesses. Small businesses continue to miss out on millions of dollars in federal contracts. Underserved communities are often hit hardest by these shortfalls, losing approximately \$17 billion in federal dollars that would have been distributed among disadvantaged businesses, women-owned and disabled veteran-owned businesses, and businesses in historically underutilized areas. Regrettably, the President's most recent budget request offers no additional funds to restore the number of PCRs needed to maintain proper oversight over federal contracting on behalf of small businesses.

**Public housing.** President Bush's budget proposal once again slashes funding for public housing, eliminates the HOPE VI public housing revitalization program (after terminating the Drug Elimination Grant program two years ago), and underfunds the Section 8 housing voucher program. Democrats are fighting to restore the Administration's severe budget cuts to housing programs and have urged the Administration to withdraw a harmful new policy that underfunds many housing agencies around the country, resulting in some voucher recipients losing their housing. In order to help provide affordable housing to the many low-income families in need, Democrats are working to authorize and fund a program to build additional affordable housing. Thousands of organizations around the country support the establishment of a National Affordable Housing Trust Fund, as introduced by Senate Democrats.

**Section 8 housing voucher program.** The Section 8 housing voucher program, created over two decades ago, helps approximately two million low-income families, over five million individuals, including working families, people with disabilities, and seniors—45 percent of whom are African American—to rent private housing. However, thousands of Americans could lose their housing under the Bush Administration's plan to cut housing voucher payments. The Bush Administration has attacked this critical program in two ways: 1) proposing drastic cuts in the program's budget (in Fiscal Year 2005 alone, the Administration has proposed to underfund the program by \$1.6 billion, threatening the homes of 250,000 families); and 2) taking executive level action to cut this program without Congressional approval. These initiatives would undermine local Public Housing Agencies' abilities to provide vouchers to all current recipients and make it nearly impossible to provide vouchers to additional families in need.

**Homeownership.** Democrats also are fighting to increase homeownership among minorities. Since President Bush took office, the homeownership gap between minorities and non-minorities has widened. Also, the percentage of Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans made to minority homebuyers has fallen, and the mortgage denial rate for minorities compared to the mortgage denial rate for non-minorities has increased. Senate Democrats introduced homeownership tax credit legislation (S. 198, the *New Homestead Economic Opportunity Act*, and S. 875, the *Community Development Homeownership Tax Credit Act*) that would allow hundreds of thousands more families to achieve the dream of owning a home.

**Predatory mortgage lending.** Rising predatory mortgage lending is a frontal attack on minority homeownership and wealth accumulation. Predatory mortgage lenders—lenders who strip equity from homes by packing inordinately high and unnecessary fees into loans that are not justified by a borrowers' risk—often target African Americans, Hispanics, immigrants, and the elderly. The Coalition for Fair and Responsible Lending indicates that predatory mortgage lending costs consumers, disproportionately minority, more than \$9 billion annually. Democrats are deeply concerned about predatory lending and its effect on the African American community and are working to strengthen protections against predatory lending. The Congressional Black Caucus has introduced legislation aimed at increasing home-buying counseling and awareness programs for the prevention of predatory lending (H.R. 1865) as well as increasing prohibitions and remedies against lenders that engage in predatory lending practices (H.R. 1663).

**Welfare.** The 1996 welfare reform statute, the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act* (PRWORA), established the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant to states as a replacement for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which had provided cash welfare to poor families with children since 1935. The new program provided additional flexibility to states to administer their own programs while requiring that able-bodied beneficiaries engage in work and work-related activities as a condition of receiving benefits. Democrats are encouraged to see that some families have succeeded in making the transition from welfare to work, but know it will be critical to maintain strong federal and state support for work supports, such as child care, if we are to address the challenges facing low-income families.

The House passed a five-year TANF reauthorization bill (H.R. 4) in February 2003, on a narrow partisan vote. Unfortunately, that bill sabotages the 1996 welfare reform effort by making it much harder for states to provide job training, education, and child care for those leaving welfare. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that it will cost states between \$8 billion and \$11 billion, and may force states to cut services for low-income families to pay for these new, unfunded welfare requirements. House Democrats fought to improve the bill by expanding access to funding for job training and education; increasing child care funding by \$11 billion over five years; rewarding states that reduce child poverty; and passing through more child-support payments to low-income families.

In September 2003, the Senate Finance Committee approved its version of H.R. 4, the *Personal Responsibility and Individual Development for Everyone* (PRIDE) Act, with only Republican members supporting the bill. On March 29, the Senate began debate on the PRIDE Act by adopting on a strong bipartisan vote (78 yeas to 20 nays) an amendment for an additional \$6 billion in child care funding over five years. However, the bill was prematurely pulled from floor consideration because the Republican Leadership refused to allow consideration of an amendment to increase the minimum wage which would help low-income working families become more self-sufficient.

Democrats will continue to fight for low-income working families, a large proportion of whom are minorities, by supporting a reauthorization bill that provides: adequate child care funding; reasonable work hours with separate requirements for mothers with children under age six; partial credit for work; child support flexibility; Transitional Medicaid Assistance (TMA) for families moving from welfare to work; improvements in the TANF contingency fund to ensure that states receive additional funding when they face rising caseloads during economic downturns; and an employment credit to encourage states to help families successfully make the transition from welfare to work.

**Job training.** The reauthorization of the *Workforce Investment Act* (WIA) offers an opportunity to build on the successes of the past four years of implementation of the 1988 Act, and to address some improvements to the workforce development and adult education system. Democrats will ensure that as WIA is reauthorized, we provide workforce investment activities that increase employment opportunities in jobs that lead to self-sufficiency, retention, earnings increases, and improve occupational skill attainment for African Americans which will strengthen this nation's workforce and overall productivity. Democrats are working to ensure that WIA eliminates training disincentives for hard-to-serve and minority workers, and continues to target low-income, in-school and out-of-school youth.

**Child care.** For the third consecutive year, the Bush Administration's Fiscal Year 2005 budget would freeze child care funding for five years, eliminating child care services for more than 300,000 children by Fiscal Year 2009. Approximately 30,000 low-income children would lose child care assistance in the first year. These cuts come at the same time the Administration is proposing to increase welfare-to-work requirements, including doubling the number of hours mothers with children under the age of six must work. The CBO estimated that states would need at least \$4.1 billion to provide child care for families meeting the President's work requirement. Currently, only one in seven eligible children receives child care assistance.

In addition, the Administration fails to help states reverse recent cuts in child care assistance. Child care assistance is a significant means for helping welfare recipients move into the workforce and helping other low-income families stay off welfare. Since 1997, states have used federal funds from the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and TANF along with state funds to expand child care assistance programs. However, because of the current budget crises in most states and the decline in TANF reserve funds, many states have been forced to slash child care assistance. According to a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) study, 23 states have reduced child care assistance for working families over the last two years, and governors in 11 states have proposed new or additional child care cuts for next year. By failing to provide sufficient funding for quality child care services, the Bush Administration is pulling the rug out from low- and moderate-income families, potentially forcing parents to leave work and go back on welfare.

Democrats believe federal support for child care must be increased not only to cover the increased work requirements for families receiving TANF, but also to continue to provide child care for low-income working families. Quality child care is essential for parents to succeed in the workplace and for children to have safe, healthy places to go while their parents are at work.

## Enhancing Education

**Head Start.** Scheduled for reauthorization in the 108th Congress, Head Start—the comprehensive preschool program for low-income children—serves nearly 300,000 African American children each year. Research continues to show that children who participate in high-quality early learning programs like Head Start experience long-lasting benefits including higher levels of academic achievement, reduced need for special education, and lower dropout rates. President Bush has proposed a plan to block grant the Head Start program, which would undermine the high-quality comprehensive services it provides and its success in helping children in poverty prepare to enter school ready to learn.

Democrats are committed to strengthening Head Start, expanding its services to additional children, and fighting any proposals to block grant Head Start and dismantle the program. In July 2003, Senate Democrats introduced a blueprint for strengthening Head Start in the upcoming reauthorization. The *Head Start Coordination and School Readiness Act of 2003* (S. 1483), builds upon the quality and high performance standards at the heart of the Head Start program. Also in July 2003, House Democrats offered a proposal (H.R. 2210) to strengthen school readiness, improve program quality, and eliminate the Republican provisions that would dismantle the high-quality federal standards and comprehensive services in Head Start. Unfortunately, nearly all House Republicans rejected that proposal.

**The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).** In January 2002, President Bush signed the NCLB legislation with the promise of improving K-12 education. Unfortunately, President Bush's budget requests have failed to live up to that commitment. In fact, the President's budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2005 would underfund the levels promised by NCLB for Fiscal Year 2005 by \$9.4 billion; leave 4.6 million disadvantaged students behind; and eliminate 38 education programs that provide vital services to African American children including dropout prevention, gifted and talented education, school counseling, alcohol abuse reduction, arts in education, and Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnerships (LEAP). Democrats recognize that minority students are disproportionately served by low-performing schools. We support efforts to bring about needed reforms targeted at these schools, but also know that reform requires additional resources. African American students, in particular, would benefit from fully-funding key priorities within NCLB, including the Title I program that helps schools meet the needs of economically and educationally disadvantaged students.

Senate Democrats fought to increase funding for NCLB by offering an amendment to the Republican Budget Resolution that would have added \$8.6 billion to fully fund NCLB. Unfortunately, Republicans defeated this amendment on March 10, 2004 by a party-line vote of 46 yeas to 52 nays.

House Democrats also have continually fought to provide needed funds to public schools. Last year, House Democrats offered an amendment that would have provided \$1 billion more than the previous year for math and reading help for disadvantaged children through Title I grants; increased special education funding by \$2.2 billion over last year; and invested more in NCLB



education programs including teacher quality grants, after-school grants, and funds for schools near military bases. This year's House Democratic budget would have invested nearly \$9.8 billion more in improving K-12 public education over the next five years. More recently, Democrats offered a proposal (H. Res. 685) to improve education by adding \$5.7 billion, creating a path toward full funding of NCLB. The proposal would have supported reading and math instruction for 500,000 additional low-income children; invested \$300 million to help working families obtain high-quality child care and after-school learning opportunities for their children; and increased assistance to local communities for children with disabilities by \$1.2 billion.

Democrats also are leading the charge to ensure equity in school funding. This year, the Congressional Black Caucus along with House and Senate Democrats introduced the Student Bill of Rights (H.R. 236) as a top educational priority. If enacted, the bill would require states to guarantee at least a minimal level of educational services across school districts and ensure that all students, regardless of race and economic status, are prepared to succeed academically and in life.

**After-school programs.** Last year, the Bush Administration tried to cut 500,000 children from after-school programs. This year, the Bush Administration's budget freezes funding for after-school programs. Over one million children who need after-school services under NCLB will not receive them. Because a lack of after-school supervision puts young people at greater risk of substance abuse and poor academic performance, many educators and law enforcement officers support after-school programs as an important way to reduce juvenile crime. Democrats are committed to providing adequate federal support for after-school programs. A couple of Senate Democrats offered an amendment to fulfill NCLB's after-school promise. Unfortunately, all Republicans opposed this amendment, which was defeated by a vote of 42 yeas to 54 nays.

**Private school vouchers.** Government dollars are being used to fund private schools through voucher plans in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Cleveland, Ohio; Florida; and now the District of Columbia. Because NCLB does not apply to private schools, a two-tiered system that holds students in public and private schools to different standards has been created. Teachers, parents, and the general public have long been opposed to private school tuition vouchers because they direct public funds and attention away from the critical task of improving schools for all students. In addition, there is little evidence to suggest that voucher programs improve academic achievement.

The President's Fiscal Year 2005 budget once again includes voucher programs that would divert over \$4 billion in public funds to private schools over the next four years. While the President says he wants accountability for the use of these federal funds, the higher educational standards and testing requirements in NCLB do not apply to the private schools that students would attend under the President's voucher program. Vouchers simply are not the answer to public education reform and a bipartisan majority in the Senate agrees that we need to focus on other reform measures. During the debate on the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) reauthorization, the Senate rejected a Republican amendment to create a \$50 million private school voucher program by a vote of 41 yeas to 58 nays.

Democrats have been leaders in the fight to improve public schools and provide all children with a quality education. We oppose alternatives that divert attention, energy, and resources from efforts to reduce class size, enhance teacher quality, and provide every student with books, computers, and safe and orderly schools. Democrats support public schools and public school choice, such as open enrollment and charter schools within public school systems. These proposals harness the positive forces of the free market without leaving some students behind.

**Minority-serving institutions.** Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) enroll upwards of 370,000 students and graduate a significant share of all African Americans receiving degrees. According to the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), HBCUs are providers of educational opportunity for hundreds of thousands of students and are responsible for producing approximately 23 percent of all bachelor's degrees, 13 percent of all master's degrees, and 20 percent of all first professional degrees earned annually by African Americans.

Black colleges and universities are an unwavering symbol of freedom in education for many African Americans. Today, HBCUs are working to develop innovative instructional approaches and academic programs (including the use of new technologies) that are well-suited to meet the needs of students and communities, while also promoting social change in the United States and around the world. Democrats believe that strong federal support for HBCUs is essential given their historic and current importance to nearly a half million students, their families, and millions of proud and accomplished alumni.

President Bush's 2004 budget slashed desperately needed funds from certain classes of Historically Black Colleges that have a specific focus on agriculture while maintaining funding levels for similarly focused predominantly white institutions. The Congressional Black Caucus was at the forefront of the Democratic effort to reveal and correct this funding disparity and was successful in restoring \$3.5 million in funding to these historically Black Land Grant Colleges.

**TRIO and GEAR UP.** The Congressional Black Caucus spearheaded the groundbreaking Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) education initiative. In its six years of implementation, this landmark program has prepared over one million disadvantaged students to seek higher education. GEAR UP supports early college awareness for low-income youth starting in middle school. In addition, GEAR UP identifies entire cohorts of students in high-poverty schools, rather than individual students, and helps them complete high school courses. This program is critical for African American students, who are more likely than other students to drop out of high school and less likely than others to attend and complete college. TRIO programs help low-income first-generation students prepare for, attend, and complete college. Both TRIO and GEAR UP programs work effectively to ensure that the greatest number of students complete high school and get the critical information needed to apply to and finance college, as well as to go on to earn a college degree. Democrats are committed to strengthening and expanding these critical programs.

**Pell grants.** The federal Pell Grant Program has been the foundation of federal investment in higher education since 1973. Pell grants are key to helping young African Americans get to college, with more than 45 percent of African American students at four-year public colleges and universities depending on Pell grants to make college affordable (Source: Congressional Research Service estimates based on National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, Department of Education, 1999-2000). Only 17 percent of African American adults over age 25 have their bachelor's degree.

Concern about the increase in student loan debt is causing a rising number of students, especially minorities, to opt out of enrolling in college, or to leave college before earning their degree. During his campaign, then-Governor Bush promised a \$5,100 Pell grant for all freshmen in 2000. Unfortunately, President Bush broke his promise. President Bush has frozen the maximum Pell grant award for three years straight, despite the fact that last year's maximum award (\$4,050) was worth nearly \$700 less, in real terms, than the maximum award in 1975–1976.

Democrats are committed to creating greater access to college by expanding financial aid programs that help our young people attend and graduate from college. Senate Republicans rejected a Democratic amendment to increase the maximum Pell grant from \$4,050 to \$5,100 on March 11, 2004 by a vote of 44 yeas to 53 nays. More recently, Republicans in the House rejected a Democratic Resolution (H. Res. 685) to increase the maximum Pell grant by \$450 to \$4,500 by a vote of 184 yeas to 230 nays.

## Enhancing Health Care

**Medicare and affordable prescription drugs.** Nearly four million African Americans receive their health care through Medicare, and many are struggling to pay for the soaring cost of prescription drugs. Last year, the Republican-controlled Congress enacted a Medicare prescription drug bill that benefits big drug companies and private health plans. This bill does little to lower drug prices and fails to provide seniors with meaningful, affordable coverage. Democrats are fighting to improve this unfair, ineffective legislation by enhancing the drug benefit and allowing Medicare to use its purchasing power to negotiate lower drug prices. Democrats also are fighting to make prescription drugs more affordable by working to create a safe system for importing prescription drugs from Canada and other major industrialized countries.

**Medicaid.** Because African Americans are less likely to have employer-sponsored health coverage, Medicaid is an important source of health coverage. About 24 percent of Medicaid recipients are African American. Even though the number of uninsured Americans is growing, states have been forced to scale back Medicaid spending in recent years because of serious state financial problems. In 2003, Democrats responded to this crisis by successfully fighting for \$10 billion to help states with their Medicaid costs—an effort the Bush Administration originally opposed. Democrats also are fighting against the President's Medicaid plan which would eliminate the current guarantee that federal funds will automatically increase as the cost of providing health services for many Medicaid recipients increases. The plan would give states new authority to cut benefits, cap enrollment, and increase the amount Medicaid recipients must pay for services.

**Access to health care.** The number of uninsured Americans has increased by 3.8 million since 2000, and health insurance premiums have been increasing by double-digit rates for the past three years. Lack of access to health care is especially problematic for African Americans. Almost 20 percent of African Americans are uninsured, which is higher than the national average. Democrats have introduced a package of bills that would provide affordable health insurance to millions of Americans. In fact, more than half of those who are uninsured would be eligible for health insurance under these proposals (Source: U.S. Census, September 30, 2003). These bills would expand public programs like Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) as well as make private health insurance more affordable, especially for employees of small businesses. Democrats also have sought to make prescription drugs more affordable by working to create a safe system for importing lower-priced drugs from Canada and 19 other major industrialized countries.

**Health disparities.** The health status of African Americans, like other minorities, continues to lag behind white Americans. African Americans have disproportionately higher rates of illness and death, including higher rates of infant mortality and deaths from diabetes. Democrats are working to eliminate these health disparities by reducing the number of uninsured and underserved minorities, increasing the number of minority health professionals, expanding health screening and outreach programs in communities of color, improving racial and ethnic health data collection, and enhancing research focused on causes and elimination of health disparities. Last year, Senate and House Democrats worked with the Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, and the Congressional Native American Caucus to introduce comprehensive legislation—the *Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act*—to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities.

**Domestic HIV/AIDS programs.** The rate of HIV/AIDS among African Americans continues to increase at an alarming rate. In its latest examination of the epidemic, the Centers for Disease Control reported that African Americans represent 54 percent of new HIV/AIDS cases contracted in the U.S., while comprising only 12 percent of the population. African American women represent 72 percent of these new cases. Democrats have been working to secure additional funding for domestic HIV/AIDS programs and have been critical of the woefully inadequate Bush Administration requests. Both this year and last year, President Bush requested an inadequate increase for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program—millions below the amount needed to ensure that all eligible people who are HIV positive have access to this important program. In addition, the budget request froze all other components of the *Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resource Emergency (CARE) Act* (which assists with health care and other supportive services) and froze funding for HIV/AIDS prevention programs.

## Protecting, Strengthening, and Enforcing Civil Rights

Democrats remain steadfastly committed to the preservation of Americans' civil rights.

**Judicial nominations.** Democrats know that our federal courts have played a critical role in upholding and strengthening civil rights, environmental and consumer protections, as well as workers' privacy rights. Numerous Bush nominees have anti-civil rights, anti-environment, and anti-consumer protection records. Democrats have been vigorously working to identify their biases and concerns, and prevent these nominees from slipping through the system undetected. President Bush tries to frame these efforts as political bickering, but federal judges shape our basic daily rights and protections, and Democrats will continue to vigorously oppose nominees who will not protect our communities.

**Election reform.** Democrats strongly support election reform. Despite the gains made during the civil rights era, unfortunately, African Americans and other people of color are often denied the opportunity to vote. In its budget for Fiscal Year 2005, the Administration calls for only \$40 million in funding for election reform, even though the bipartisan *Help America Vote Act* authorizes \$800 million more to ensure that everyone's vote is accurately counted. Democrats support full funding for the *Help America Vote Act* and increased funding for the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. We are fighting to ensure that its resources are being used effectively to prevent voter suppression and minority vote dilution.

**Hate crimes.** Hate crimes are a serious threat to all communities. Experts estimate that a bias-related crime is committed every 14 minutes. Democrats strongly support legislation to end hate crimes, and have succeeded in passing this legislation in both the House and the Senate only to see the Republican leadership block final enactment.

**Voting rights for citizens of the District of Columbia.** Democrats support ensuring that the District's 600,000 citizens have their voices represented in Congress. The citizens of the District of Columbia have one of the highest per capita federal tax obligations of all states, but the residents of this predominantly African American city do not have representation in the federal government to protect their interests. In March 2003, some Democrats introduced the *No Taxation Without Representation Act of 2003*, which provides full voting representation in Congress for the residents of the District of Columbia, including two Senators and as many Representatives as a similarly populous state would be entitled to under law.

**Racial profiling.** Across the country, too many motorists fear that they will be stopped by police officers for no reason other than the color of their skin. Whether it's while driving, walking, or shopping, Democrats are committed to requiring federal, state, and local law enforcement officers to take steps to prevent racial profiling. The Congressional Black Caucus added provisions in the recently House- and Senate-passed transportation reauthorization bill that would encourage states to create tough racial profiling laws by providing grants to the states that do so to develop and maintain data as well as provide law enforcement training. In addition, the Congressional Black Caucus introduced the *End Racial Profiling Act of 2004* which would prohibit any law enforcement agent or agency from engaging in racial profiling and direct law enforcement officers to implement specific policies to eliminate racial profiling.

## Protecting the Environment and Public Health

**Environmental justice.** Democrats are committed to providing the American people with a cleaner environment, strong public health protections, and a brighter future for their families. Democrats continue to work to ensure that more people are breathing clean air and drinking clean water; toxic waste and industrial sites are cleaned up; and that minority and low-income populations do not suffer a disproportionate burden of pollution and associated public health threats. In order to combat the disparity in exposure to hazardous substances, members of the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus have introduced the *Community Environmental Equity Act* (H.R. 4215) which would amend existing law by adding a specific prohibition against entities exposing communities on the grounds of race, color, or economic status to environmental hazards and pollutants.

**Toxic waste cleanup.** The Superfund toxic waste cleanup program, which is based on the polluter pays principle, has made it possible to cleanup hundreds of toxic waste dumps across the country. Despite the fact that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) national priority list includes 1,234 sites that require a cleanup and one in four Americans lives within four miles of a Superfund site, the Bush Administration has attacked this program. In 2002, the Bush Administration announced it would not seek reauthorization of the Superfund fee that is used to pay for the cleanup of waste sites. In addition, the Bush Administration has insufficiently funded the program, delaying previously scheduled site cleanups. These cleanup programs are important given the disproportionate share of toxic waste sites located in African American communities.

Specifically, African Americans are heavily concentrated in cities with the largest number of abandoned toxic waste sites, such as Memphis, St. Louis, Houston, Cleveland, Chicago, and Atlanta (Source: <http://cbcfhealth.org/content/contentID/1107>). Recognizing the danger of this situation, Senate Democrats are fighting to adequately fund the Superfund toxic waste cleanup program and introduced S.173, the *Toxic Cleanup Polluter Pays Renewal Act*.

**Clean water.** Progress has been made in cleaning up our nation's lakes and rivers and eliminating pollution discharges, but 40 percent of our lakes, rivers, and streams remain too polluted for fishing and swimming. More than 300,000 miles of rivers and shoreline and five million acres of lakes remain too contaminated for recreational use. Under the Bush Administration, enforcement of our environmental laws has dropped by 45 percent. Democrats support measures to provide funding to ensure that our lakes and rivers are clean enough for fishing and swimming and that the public has drinking water that is safe and clean.

**Clean air.** Over seven million African Americans live in counties with dangerous air pollution levels. As a result, asthma cases are 26 percent more prevalent among African American than white children. Despite this unfortunate reality, the Bush Administration continues to undermine enforcement of the *Clean Air Act* and issue regulations that weaken existing programs. (Source: Black Leadership Forum, Clear the Air, and Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda, *Air of Injustice: African Americans and Power Plant Pollution*; [http://www.earthdaycoalition.org/what\\_is\\_eq/air.html](http://www.earthdaycoalition.org/what_is_eq/air.html))

**Mercury.** Mercury is a highly toxic chemical that can cause neurological and developmental problems in fetuses, infants, and children. The EPA recently released a study showing that one in six pregnant women in the United States has enough mercury in her bloodstream to threaten the health of the child. Mercury contamination in fish across the United States is so pervasive that 45 states have issued fish consumption advisories. The Food and Drug Administration has also warned pregnant women about the dangers of eating tuna fish, which absorb mercury through their tissues. Recently, the Bush Administration weakened language on the health risks of mercury exposure in the proposed rule to regulate mercury emissions from power plants. Senate Democrats oppose these changes and believe a new mercury rule should be issued that does not undermine public health and air quality.

**The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).** LIHEAP helps more than 4.5 million elderly, disabled, and low-income working families pay their home energy bills. For four years, the Bush Administration has opposed funding increases to this program. The Administration proposed \$2 billion for LIHEAP in its Fiscal Year 2005 budget proposal. Given the importance of LIHEAP to many African American families, Democrats have supported an increased funding level for LIHEAP of \$3.4 billion.

## Strengthening International Policy

**Battling the global HIV/AIDS pandemic.** More than 26 million of the 40 million people infected with HIV worldwide live in sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, AIDS remains the leading cause of death in this region of the world. In some African countries, as much as one-third of the adult population is infected. Illustrating the dramatic toll this disease takes on the infected, Botswana's life expectancy is 74 years for those without HIV, but only 27 years for those infected with HIV.



For years, congressional Democrats have fought for a stronger commitment to addressing the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. Based on their long-term interest in this issue, Democrats were pleased when President Bush unveiled his Global HIV/AIDS Initiative in his 2003 State of the Union Address. In May 2003, working together, Congress enacted *The United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act*, long-championed by the Congressional Black Caucus—authorizing \$3 billion a year over the next five years to combat global HIV/AIDS. Although President Bush originally committed to spending \$3 billion on these global efforts, unfortunately, his budget request has fallen short of this amount in each of the first two years of the initiative, undermining its effectiveness.

Over the last two years during the annual appropriations process, Democrats have fought to add funding for initiatives that help combat global HIV/AIDS. For example, House Democrats attempted to bring to the floor an amendment that would have added \$1 billion for Fiscal Year 2004 for the global HIV/AIDS initiative—raising the level to the \$3 billion originally promised by President Bush. Unfortunately, this amendment was blocked. Last year, Senate Democrats offered several amendments to increase global HIV/AIDS funding, but regrettably, Senate Republicans opposed many of these efforts. Democrats were successful, however, in passing a bipartisan amendment increasing President Bush's budget request by \$289 million. This year, President Bush's budget has once again fallen short, and Democrats are again committed to increasing funding for efforts to combat global HIV/AIDS.

**Preventing food shortages in Africa.** Democrats have fought hard to help alleviate the food crisis in Africa. During debate on the Fiscal Year 2003 Omnibus Appropriations bill, Senate Democrats pushed for an additional \$500 million for food aid. Unfortunately, Republicans cut this amount in half during conference negotiations. Senate Democrats also introduced an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2004 Foreign Relations Authorization bill mandating that the Secretary of Agriculture use the authority of the Credit Commodities Corporation to provide \$250 million of food aid to AIDS victims in Africa. President Bush's Food for Peace Fiscal Year 2005 budget request is a disappointing \$1.2 billion—an amount equal to last year's appropriation. However, Congress appropriated an additional \$369 million for Food for Peace in last year's supplemental appropriation's bill, so the request is effectively a \$369 million funding cut. Moreover, the Administration's proposal for the McGovern–Dole School Lunch program is still \$25 million below the Fiscal Year 2004 level and \$225 million below the funding level of the program during the previous Administration. Democrats are committed to increasing funding for these vital programs.

**Facilitating development in Africa.** While Democrats work to pass foreign assistance initiatives such as the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), which improves the economies and standards of living in qualified developing countries, we will also fight Republican efforts to undermine other vital programs. Democrats strongly supported the appropriation of roughly \$1 billion for the fund's initial year, and will work to increase funding for the MCA in Fiscal Year 2005. Democrats will work to ensure that funding increases of the MCA are not coupled with funding decreases of other initiatives, including the Global AIDS Initiative and programs under the *African Growth and Opportunity Act*.

In addition, President Bush's Fiscal Year 2005 budget proposal would cut Child Survival and Health programs, emergency refugee assistance, and development assistance funds. Democrats successfully fought to restore cuts to these programs in President Bush's Fiscal Year 2004 budget, and are committed to restoring program funding again this year, given the initiatives' vital role in our country's efforts to assist Africa.

**Promoting civil society in Africa.** Democrats have been calling for increased U.S. engagement in Africa for some time. During last year's peak in the crisis in Liberia, Democrats strongly supported the U.S. peacekeeping mission. Since the peace agreement was signed in August 2003, Democrats have pushed for funding to sustain the Liberian government's transition process. A Senate Democrat succeeded in providing \$200 million in international disaster and famine aid and Congress also provided \$250 million for the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Liberia. Earlier this year, Senate Democrats championed the passage of the *Northern Uganda Crisis Response Act* (S. 2264), in support of a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Northern Uganda. Democrats also have aggressively urged the Administration to take a leadership role in ending the escalating genocide in Sudan's Darfur region. The Congressional Black Caucus and House and Senate Democrats have introduced resolutions condemning the Sudanese government's role in perpetuating the crisis in Darfur. In addition, we have sent letters to President Bush and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan outlining an aggressive strategy for ending the violence and providing much-needed humanitarian assistance to the displaced refugees of Sudan.

**Establishing stability and security in Haiti.** Democrats are united in support of democracy across the globe. Following the departure of the democratically elected government in Haiti, both House and Senate Democrats underwent efforts to provide a much-needed security presence and urgent humanitarian assistance to Haitian citizens. The Congressional Black Caucus and House Democrats were successful in a bipartisan effort to secure an additional \$50 million in a Fiscal Year 2005 appropriation for



infrastructure development aid that would place Haiti on the path toward self-sufficiency. In addition, several Democrats have co-sponsored the bipartisan *Haiti Economic Recovery Act*, introduced last year, and a Senate Democrat introduced the *Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act (HRIFA) Improvement Act* in order to improve opportunities for Haitian immigrants.

## Providing Homeland Security

Since September 11, 2001, Democrats have been concerned about the underfunding of homeland security priorities by the Republican majority. Indeed, in December 2001 (in the Fiscal Year 2002 Anti-Terrorism Supplemental Appropriations bill; PL 107–117) and again in February 2003 (in the Fiscal Year 2003 Omnibus Appropriations bill; PL 108–7), through their persistence, Democrats have been successful in winning some important funding increases for homeland security.

Democrats are fighting to increase homeland security funding, particularly for our nation's first responders—a group in dire need of increased resources. In June 2003, a Council on Foreign Relations independent task force report, *Emergency Responders: Drastically Underfunded, Dangerously Unprepared*, found a five-year budget shortfall of \$98 billion for first responders. Yet, President Bush's Fiscal Year 2005 budget proposal would reduce funding for grants to local police, fire and emergency medical agencies from \$4.2 billion in Fiscal Year 2004 to \$3.5 billion in Fiscal Year 2005—more than a 15 percent decrease. As Kevin O'Connor of the International Association of Firefighters stated, "This budget is profoundly disappointing to first responders.... It's a continuation of the President's lack of commitment to first responders in general and firefighters in particular" (Source: UPI, February 2, 2004). Conversely, the Congressional Black Caucus's Fiscal Year 2005 budget substitute would have increased funding for first responders, federal air marshals, and other homeland security needs by nearly \$2.5 billion.

Democrats have fought throughout the year to secure increased funding for other homeland security initiatives. For example, House Democrats attempted to bring to the floor an amendment that would have created a \$3 billion contingent emergency fund for homeland security for Fiscal Year 2005, including \$1.4 billion in additional funding for first responders. Unfortunately, Republicans blocked this amendment. Senate Democrats fought to increase homeland security funding during debate on the Fiscal Year 2005 Budget Resolution. In addition to offering several amendments designed to restore funding to critical homeland security initiatives like the *Firefighter Investment and Response Enhancement (FIRE) Act*, Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants, and Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants, Senate Democrats successfully included an amendment to the Budget Resolution increasing port security and first responder funding by \$1.7 billion.

**Domestic crime.** In an effort to enhance domestic security, several Senate Democrats introduced S. 22, the *Justice Enhancement and Domestic Security Act of 2003*. This bill would combat terrorism and enhance domestic security; protect America's children and seniors; deter identity theft; assist victims of crime and domestic violence; support law enforcement and the effective administration of justice; combat drug and gun violence; and strengthen federal criminal laws.

As the record shows, Democrats have a steadfast commitment to and long-standing history of support for legislative issues that matter to all Americans, particularly African Americans. We will continue to advance a sound public policy agenda that continues to reflect what is important to all Americans.